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NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS



IN CHARGE OF

ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

A SMALL QUICKLY MADE STERILIZER.—Dr. Douglas H. Stewart describes in the *Medical Record* a small portable sterilizer which should be of great value to nurses, particularly to those engaged in district nursing.

Select any rather long, wide-mouthed bottle with a good rubber, or other cork, possibly a glass stopper. Put into the bottom of this a heaping teaspoonful of borax, cover this with two or three pieces of blotting paper of as large a size as will lie flat, pour in a teaspoonful of formalin, push down on this a layer of absorbent cotton to keep all in place, put in the article to be sterilized and press the cork home. Instruments may be wrapped in cotton to prevent contact. The formalin gas generated will thoroughly sterilize needles, old-fashioned hypodermic syringes with leather or rubber washers and plunger and forceps, etc., and maintain them in a sterile condition as long as they are exposed to it. Twenty minutes is sufficient for the process. The instruments may be carried in the bottle ready for instant use. Towels, dressings, etc., absorb too much formalin, and are too irritating to use. Steel will not rust. The borax does not have to be replaced very often, the formalin is renewed when the blotting paper looks dry.

ABORTING A FELON.—*The American Journal of Surgery* recommends that when a felon is feared the end of the finger should be covered with cotton saturated with alcohol and the air excluded by drawing over all a rubber finger cot.

CREATIVE SURGERY.—Dr. Russell Bellamy, surgeon U. S. A., in an intensely interesting article under this heading in the *New York Medical Journal*, describes his results in the line of creative surgery.

He has caused parts of fingers that have been destroyed to grow again, even the nail forming itself anew. Eighteen cases in all are reported. In one severe lacerated and contused wound of the hand and wrist the tissue grew again, leaving no scar. In a plantar wound leaving two mangled toes and an irregular circular concavity, the toes grew again, the wound healed and there was virtually no difference between the two feet, while function was perfect. In one case a white index finger from above the first joint was grown on the hand of a black woman after hospital surgeons had decided that amputation of

the hand was absolutely necessary. By what means are these marvels wrought?

Dr. Bellamy speaks of it as "a cell discovered and found essential in growing tissues, thereby making creative surgery possible." These cells are contained in the delicate membrane lining an egg shell, which consists of two layers. Some days before the hatching of the chick a number of well-developed bloodvessels can be observed in the inner or cell-bearing surface, while the outer side is smooth and glistening. It is this membrane that is used in conjunction with sea water, recently procured and kept in sterile flasks. Sterile dressings and splints and gauze dressings are used as required. The area to be treated is made as nearly aseptic as possible. From time to time new cells are introduced to facilitate the growth of structures or to hasten the growth of granulating surfaces. The growth of the different structures seemed to be in perfect harmony. The nerves were pronouncedly well developed, sensory motor as well as tactile corpuscles, and are responsive to heat and cold.

MENDING RUBBER GLOVES.—Dr. Eugene H. Pool recommends in the *Medical Record* that an arch or belt punch to be used to cut the small pieces of rubber used to repair fractures in rubber gloves. These patches are fastened on with rubber cement and the edges being perfectly smooth and even adhere perfectly and render the glove safe for use in an operation.

SHOCK.—Dr. W. P. Carr, in an article in the *New York Medical Journal*, says that Dr. George W. Crile has demonstrated conclusively that shock is a condition of the brain cells, consisting mainly in a shrinking of the cell nucleus and a dissipation of the granular matter of the protoplasm. There is now no more mystery about it than the using up of plates and fluid in a storage battery. Shock is the exhaustion by excessive discharge of nerve impulses of certain chemicals from the cell that are necessary for its activity. These substances may be restored under favorable conditions, provided their exhaustion is not too complete and the cell disrupted. Crile thinks that shock is not caused by direct action upon the brain cells, but by impulses brought to them by the afferent nerves, those that convey impulses from the surface to the brain, these impulses calling for violent action or effort. They are impulses that suggest evil to the organism, calling for strong efforts of defense or escape, requiring tremendous discharge of nerve impulse from the cells of the brain regulating the mechanism of escape or defense.

Pain, fear, and the pulling upon important viscera are among the

more important causes of shock. But conscious or sub-conscious fear seems to enter into all the causes as a potent factor. Chloroform and ether do not prevent shock, nitrous oxide does so to a marked degree. No matter how brave or stoical a patient may be, nor how profoundly under the influence of ether, the automatic suggestion of danger may reach his brain and automatically discharge his brain cells exactly as if he were in an actual struggle for his life.

Emergency operations are less likely to be followed by shock, because there is less time for apprehension. Suggestive preparations should as far as possible be avoided before an operation, the patient kept in a proper frame of mind and not brought into the anesthetizing room until it is time to begin the anesthetic. Morphia and atropine should be given beforehand to chill the sensibilities. The patient should be kept in a cheerful, comfortable state by all proper assurances from the surgeon. With more experience shock may be mastered as hemorrhage and infection have been.

STREPTOCOCCUS VACCINES IN SCARLET FEVER PROPHYLAXIS.—Dr. W. H. Watters reports in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* the results of immunizing a number of nurses in the contagious department of the Massachusetts Homeopathic Hospital by administering hypodermatically a polyvalent streptococcus vaccine. During two years but one case, and that a very light one, occurred among a number of nurses who received vaccines, while among a considerably smaller group under identical conditions and environment five times as many cases occurred and these not particularly light. The idea was suggested by a paper written by a Russian, Gabritschewsky.

INCREASE OF DEATH RATE ABOVE FORTY.—The *Medical Record*, quoting from a contemporary, says since 1880 the American death rate per 1000 of the population has been reduced about 25 per cent. This is due chiefly to the spread of knowledge as to the cause and the means of prevention of tuberculosis, typhoid fever, diphtheria, small pox, etc., to the increase of interest in sanitation and the adoption of more healthful living habits by the people. Yet the death rate above the age of 40 has increased heavily, the causes being chiefly the common chronic affections, diseases of the kidneys, the heart, and the bloodvessels. Yet these diseases of advanced age are to a great degree preventable or postponable. It would seem as if the time were ripe for a campaign of education in reference to the causes of mortality above the age of forty similar to the campaign against infant mortality and against the common infections.